

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace Paragraph [0007] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0007] In its embodiments, the present invention contemplates a gasket that includes a first generally planar portion having an inner perimeter and an exterior perimeter, and having a first surface and a second surface on an opposite side from the first surface. The gasket also includes a seal bead rising from the first surface a first predetermined height, and being adjacent to and extending about the inner perimeter, and a fastener hole extending through the first portion from the first surface to the second surface and located between the seal bead and the exterior perimeter. The gasket of the present invention also includes a seal protruding feature located between the fastener hole and the exterior perimeter, and rising from the first surface a second predetermined height that is about equal to or greater than the first predetermined height.

Please replace Paragraph [0021] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0021] The carrier 22 also includes eight fastener holes 30 extending therethrough, spaced between the seal bead 26 and the exterior perimeter 25. Adjacent each fastener hole 30, between the hole 30 and the exterior perimeter 25, is a seal protruding feature 32 spaced from the seal bead. Each seal protruding feature 32 preferably rises above the surface of the carrier 22 a height that is about equal to or greater than the height of the seal bead 26. As shown in Figure 2, each protruding

feature 32 has two terminating end portions 32a, 32b such that the protruding feature only partially circumscribes the hole 30 so that the protruding feature does not completely surround or circumscribe the hole 30. As an alternative, if so desired, the seal protruding member 24 and/or the seal features 32 can be formed integral with the carrier 22, such as with a molding operation. And, of course, a second set of protruding seal features and a seal bead can extend from the opposite surface of the gasket 20 in order to seal to a second member that mounts on the opposite side of the gasket, if so desired.

Please replace Paragraph [0022] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0022] During the assembly process, the compressive force applied to the gasket 20, due to the torque applied by fasteners, will be counteracted by both the sealing bead 26 and the seal protruding features 32. Thus, if the height of the seal protruding features 32 are about the same as the height of the seal bead 26, they will essentially eliminate flange bending. This assures that the desired sealing force is applied to the seal bead 26, while significantly reducing any chances of flange cracking during the assembly process. If the height of the seal protruding features 32 are greater than the height of the seal bead 26, they will cause a slight inward bending of the flange, thus increasing the sealing force on the sealing bead 26. It is preferable that the height difference is small, however, in order to avoid concerns with flange cracking during assembly.

Please replace Paragraph [0025] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0025] The gasket 60 also includes two fastener holes 78 therethrough that are located between the seal beads 70-75 and the exterior perimeter 66. Adjacent each fastener hole 78, between the hole 78 and the exterior perimeter 66, is a pair of seal protruding features 80 which are configured generally the same as protruding features 32. The seal protruding features 80 for each fastener hole 78 rise from opposite sides of the carrier 62. Again, as with the first embodiment, each seal protruding feature 80 preferably rises a height above the surface of the carrier 62 that is about equal to or greater than the height of the corresponding seal beads 70-75. The seal protruding features 80 will minimize flange bending and assure the appropriate sealing force on the seal beads 70-75, the same as described above relative to the first embodiment.

Please replace Paragraph [0026] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0026] FIG. 8 illustrates another embodiment of the present invention. A gasket 85 has an inner perimeter 88, which defines a cutout area 90, and an exterior perimeter 89, as well as a first surface 91 and a second, opposite surface 92. The gasket 85 includes a pair of seal beads 93, 94 extending about the inner perimeter 88, with one rising above the first surface 91 and the other rising from the second surface 92. A pair of fastener holes 93 through the gasket 85 are located between the seal beads 94 and the exterior perimeter 89. Adjacent each fastener hole 93, between the respective fastener hole 93 and the exterior perimeter 89, is a pair of seal protruding features 95,

96 which are configured generally the same as protruding features 32. Each ~~seal~~ protruding features 95, 96 in a pair extends from the opposite surface of the gasket 85 from the other, and rises a height above the corresponding surface of the gasket that is about equal to or greater than the height of the corresponding sealing bead. Then, when a member 97 to be sealed is compressed against the gasket 85 by fasteners 98, the ~~seal~~ protruding features 95, 96 will cooperate with the seal bead 94 to minimize flange bending and assure the appropriate amount of sealing force on the seal bead 94.